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Message Text

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51
ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 SAB-01 AID-05

CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 /074 W
---------- 130671
R 270823Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3060
INFO DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1135

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PLO
SUBJ: NEW CHIEF OF PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY

REF: DIA 9234 (NOTAL)

1. ACCORDING TO WELL-INFORMED LOCAL PALESTINIAN SOURCE, NEW CHIEF OF PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY WAS ANNOUNCED MARCH 26. HE IS MAJOR GENERAL MAHMOUD AZZAM, FORMER DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE SYRIAN AIR FORCE. UNTIL THIS ANNOUNCEMENT HIS RANK HAD BEEN BRIGADIER.

2. WE HAVE AS YET NO CONFIRMATION OF THIS APPOINTMENT, BUT IT FITS IN WITH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, I.E., THAT ASAD FINALLY AGREED TO ARAFAT'S DESIRE TO REPLACE COLONEL MUSBAH BUDAIRI BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT THE NEW PLA COMMANDER BE A TRUSTED BAATHI. AZZAM FILLS THIS QUALIFICATION.

3. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, AZZAM IS SYRIAN OF PALESTINIAN PARENTAGE (ORIGINALLY FROM NAZARETH) WHO HAS BEEN CLOSE TO ASAD BOTH POLITICALLY AND PERSONALLY SINCE
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THEY WERE PILOT TRAINEES TOGETHER IN THE SOVIET UNION.

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AZZAM IS ALSO CLOSE TO AND SPONSORED BY KHALID FAHOUM,
CHAIRMAN OF PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL.

4. NO WORD ON FUTURE OF BUDAIRI. SOURCE SAYS HE IS
RELATED TO SYRIAN MINDEF TLAS THROUGH THEIR WIVES
AND THUS MAY OBTAIN ANOTHER POSITION.
MURPHY

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NNN

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Type: TE
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